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PROFITABLE  
INTERVIEWING

by

W. A. JEFFREYS

MATSON'S PUBLICATIONS  
ST. IVES, HUNTINGDON

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# Profitable Interviewing

THE LURE OF THE CHASE





# Profitable Interviewing

## THE LURE OF THE CHASE.

As a boy I collected cigarette cards.

Then the first world war came and I collected bits of shrapnel and German bullets sent from "over there" by sentimental uncles. Towards the end of my high school days the writing bug infected me with an urge that increases with the passing of time. From that point my interests veered decisively.

I started to collect celebrities.

And if you, my friend, have not collected celebrities you have yet to enter one of the most absorbing and exciting fields the writer can set himself to conquer.

I mean just that.

In the course of twenty years of journalism I have experienced almost every angle of the profession, from reporting to sub-editing, from sports writing to dramatic criticism and the compiling of literary competitions, from staid technical articles to the lightest of fiction.

From the welter of all this literary activity emerges the fact that I have found no subject more enthralling, more thoroughly satisfying, than Interviewing.

Let me show you the whys and wherefores that you, too, may develop your ability to experience the thrills and joys of this most fascinating aspect of the writers' craft.

## THE RIGHT APPROACH.

No matter who or what we are, it is a peculiar fact that the average person has a distinct streak of shyness in his or her make-up. Oh, yes, even the blustering self-confidence of the go-getter frequently masks a natural nervousness, though he would die rather than admit it.

Right. Let's acknowledge the fact, for only by facing up to our shortcomings can we hope to get the better of them.

Clarence Johnstone once told me that, after years of topping the bill, he was almost too nervous to walk across the stage, yet when he reached the piano at which his partner, Turner Layton, was playing, every trace of shyness vanished in the first few notes of song.

You are like that. I know I was. 'Green and callow,' my friends used to say.

You can overcome it.

How can you banish this natural weakness?

By developing personality.

And how can you develop personality?

By meeting people. All kinds of people, no matter at what stage of life they may be; in fact, the greater the variation, the better.

The step between dreaming of meeting people and carrying out those dreams is one of the most important the aspiring writer can take.

Please let me make it clear at this stage that, although it is hoped that this book may evoke the interest of the more experienced writer, it is planned primarily to encourage and instruct

those who have yet to make their mark in the journalistic field.

The young writer must therefore be honest with himself and set himself the initial task of training and developing his personality to such a standard that he will experience no hardship, no difficulty, in meeting people, in conversing with them, and, what is his ultimate aim, in turning this achievement to journalistic writings of such undoubted merit as to warrant editors reaching enthusiastically for their cheque books.

So much for the abstract. Now for the concrete.

Please get it fixed firmly in your mind that, if you are to make a success of your writing career, sooner or later you will have to break the ice in connection with this interviewing business.

What are the basic rules you should set up and work by in order to ensure successful results?

One of the most elementary questions that seems to rankle in the mind of every beginner is : notebook or no notebook ? Though this question is out of place in this section it is so common that we will dispose of it forthwith.

My answer is : definitely No !

Just imagine your reactions if you were the interviewee and found yourself confronted by a young writer who whipped out a notebook, laid it on the table, moistened his pencil point and held it poised threateningly over the blank page, the while fixing you with a grim and determined expression.

I'm afraid you would throw courtesy overboard and nip the interview in the bud before it

ever commenced. I offer no apologies in admitting that I should.

The nearest I have ever approached to using a notebook is to produce a used envelope from my breast pocket towards the end of the interview, and then for one reason only—to jot down names, figures, or technical facts.

No illusionist is ever more slick at making articles disappear than your humble scribe when the few quick pencil strokes which are all that is necessary to prevent my memory from failing to reproduce these facts and figures a few hours later, are completed.

### INITIATIVE AND ENTERPRISE.

Initiative and enterprise are worth more than a hundred notebooks.

Initiative is knowing how to take the lead—and keep it.

Enterprise is the ability to act quickly and correctly in an emergency, and to turn to profitable account any unforeseen or unexpected development.

Enthusiasm should rank high on your list of necessary attributes. And not only must you *possess* enthusiasm, you must *display* enthusiasm.

Let me show you what I mean.

You are proposing to interview, let us say, an astronomer. Right. No wide-awake free-lance should attempt to interview such a personality

without spending a few hours previously poring over a popular edition of some comprehensive work on the study of the stars.

Hypocritical, you say? Not at all.

Merely taking a sensible precaution that may make a deal of difference to the success of your efforts.

The value of this brief but deliberate study lies in the fact that, when the interview is in progress, you can *display enthusiasm*.

Dispel any ideas that I suggest you can pose as the expert's equal by a few hours reading. That is far from my intention.

What I do suggest and what I have, indeed, proved by experience, is that by polishing up your general knowledge you can make the conversation more interesting on both sides.

Learned people are often lonely souls. Outside their academic circles they rarely contact folk who are interested in their own subjects. It is therefore understandable that, when they do meet someone who can talk with interest and enthusiasm on the subject that is nearest their hearts, this enthusiasm spreads like ripples on a pond.

You will be repaid for your spot of study by a friendly and sympathetic reception and an interview of better quality than would have been likely if you had not primed yourself to **DISPLAY ENTHUSIASM**.

Finally, be a good listener. That phrase rather intrigued me when I first heard it. As a youngster it just hadn't occurred to me that there could be degrees of listening ability.

I have since proved the wisdom of this remark.

In a few words—say little, but listen a lot.

Initiative in the early stages, enterprise in turning developments to your own advantage, a tuned-up knowledge of your victim's favourite subject, and an intent and intelligent listening manner are necessary qualities which you must develop with tenacity and perseverance.

### INTERVIEWS IN VARIETY.

The beginner seldom reflects upon the variation in methods of interviewing. To him, interviewing means only one thing—meeting another person face to face, asking questions and obtaining information.

This is, no doubt, the everyday definition of the subject.

The aspiring journalist must not overlook two other important forms of interviewing; by telephone, and by letter.

Interviews by telephone are, of course, a development of modern times, and have certain advantages, chief of which is the avoidance of travel.

It is very convenient to sit at your desk in Manchester and carry out an interview with an official in Whitehall.

Here again, the tyro will find the need for training, this time in voice inflexion. You must convey charm and personality over several hundred

miles of distance, because it is possible you are approaching someone rather against his will.

You may have telephoned at an inconvenient time ; he may be handicapped in talking freely by reason of the particular people in his presence at the moment. So at best your telephone interview must be confined to extracting facts and concrete statements which you must build up and embody in an atmosphere created from your knowledge of the speaker and of his surroundings and character.

The recent war years have produced or at least brought into public prominence an unusual but very effective and valuable form of interview.

I refer to the sensational examples of interview-by-letter that fascinated and, indeed, shook us all during those six tragic years that have now so mercifully passed.

Journalists in foreign countries addressed questionnaires to world leaders whose observations on matters of nation-wide interest splashed the front pages of newspapers all over the globe.

Although these scoops were engineered by top-flight journalists in positions to approach men of the status of Generalissimo Stalin, you and I can follow their methods in connection with interviewees who come within our more limited orbit.

I have, in fact, been interviewing American film stars for years by this means. It's much more convenient than travelling across 3,000 miles of ocean !

The secret lies in presenting the information so obtained in a proper, authentic setting, and it



is in that respect that the journalist's skill comes into action, moreso perhaps than in actually securing the interview.

In the case of world leaders the mere questions and answers, set down baldly in print, are sufficient to stir the newspaper-reading public.

In contrast to this, the amateur journalist with his limited scope must soak himself in "atmosphere" and embody the factual material in a picturesque or descriptive background aimed to create or intensify reader-interest.

### PLAN YOUR MARKETS FIRST

We will now get down to the more practical side of this job of making money from interviewing—and, believe me, there is a deal of money to be made from it. Most journalists will agree that the material return from interview work far exceeds that from the more humdrum spheres of the writers' craft. Such is the value in names!

To adhere to our subject.

There is only one sure way to success in freelance journalism.

### PLAN YOUR MARKETS FIRST.

Every young writer on the threshold of his career should type out these words in capitals and pin them at eye-level above his desk.

Whether it was by luck or judgment that I first made myself memorise this invaluable rule I have never been able to establish.

But I should like to tell you this.

*I can't remember when I last received a rejection slip.*

This is not a boast. I am setting it down in print because I know of no more infallible means towards success than the persistent and careful planning of markets in advance, and I pass this golden rule on to you in one-hundred-per-cent sincerity.

Let me show you how the system works.

You have an idea for an article based on an interview with some well-known person. He can be an actor, an author, a famous scientist, or any individual in the public eye.

For the sake of example we will choose—an explorer who has just returned from a three-years trip into the uncharted interior of the Amazonian forests.

Right.

Before you ever get to work on the interview itself you must decide on the markets which are most likely to be interested in your efforts.

An explorer is a popular and romantic figure, consequently the first journal to strike your imagination is one of the popular weeklies of the *Tit-Bits* school.

Your first step is to send a letter to the editor, setting out your ideas and intentions and asking if you may submit the resultant interview for his consideration.

It is almost a certainty that you will receive a favourable reply.

The advantage of this is two-fold.

First, you will approach the interviewee with the confidence that comes of the knowledge that you are writing for a specific journal.

Mind you, the fact that the editor of *Tit-Bits* or any other journal has expressed his willingness to see the article does not imply that he has given you a firm commission.

It does mean, however, that providing your article comes up to his expectations your chances of acceptance are very bright indeed.

For such a journal you would seek to provide a universally arresting story under a somewhat general title. The fee might be anything from three to ten guineas, according to the standing of the explorer. A useful start.

You will notice that I have not suggested an article to one of the scientific or semi-scientific journals. Why?

Because it is almost a certainty that the celebrity will have his own contacts in this field, and will give his name to personal accounts of his work in the more technical press and the journals of the learned societies.

Thus a little thought will readily convince you that the most profitable channels for you to exploit are those opened up by the more popular markets.

It is hardly likely that your victim will have given a thought to *Wide World Magazine*. Here is another avenue for your pen. A study of this magazine will show you that the true-life stories contained in each issue are all written in the first person.'

It is probably an open secret that many of these stories are in actual fact written by skilled authors or journalists on the bases of interviews with the angle characters. Such stories must naturally be fully authenticated and supported by unimpeachable evidence.

There is, however, no reason why the actual *writing* should not be carried out by a second party—and that is where you come in.

*Wide World* pays good rates, too . . . .

Play the game and do not repeat the same material to similar markets. In such a case as the one under consideration it should not be difficult to make the *Tit-Bits* article a general one appealing to the average family circle, while the *Wide-World* effort could consist of a graphically written account of some extraordinary adventure not mentioned in the first article.

Having got these first two comparatively obvious articles off your chest, now is the time to bring your ingenuity into play. This can best be done by sitting down and reflecting quietly upon further possibilities.

It is well known that the market for women's interests is a vast one. You must therefore exploit this avenue.

The answer comes quickly and simply.

An article for a selected feminine journal describing the thoughts and reactions of the wife of an explorer is clearly indicated. Her lonely, anxious existence if she lives at home while her husband is abroad. Her adventurous and colourful life if she accompanies her husband on his expeditions.

The appropriate article may well be created from the one interview, assuming that this takes place at the explorer's home.

You will repeat your initial step and address an enquiring letter to the editor of the selected women's periodical. Here, again, the probability is that the reply will be favourable.

Next, how about the explorer's pets? It may have been impracticable for a dog, say, to accompany him throughout the whole of his expedition, but it is perfectly feasible that at some stages a dog may have figured in his list of companions.

There's another ready-made article. Written under an appealing title such an article would certainly gain the interest of the editor of a dog-lovers' journal, and such publications, especially if sponsored by commercial houses, often pay exceptional rates. I have received as much as eight guineas a thousand words for perfectly simple dog articles.

It may be that a cat or a kitten shared some of the explorer's adventures, particularly aboard ship. An article written specifically from a cat-enthusiast's angle would be eagerly read by the editor of *Cats and Kittens*, a likeable and well-produced little publication paying upwards of a guinea a thousand.

And so I could continue.

An article designed to tickle the palate of the modern boy would stand every chance with one of the many juvenile publications. And if you wish to take this single example further, you have an almost endless list of possible markets when you set your mind to thinking around the

several farmers' journals for articles on the various unusual and primitive methods of agriculture examined by the explorer in remote areas; the lesser-known popular weeklies (not to clash with *Tit-Bits*) on the customs and rites of ancient races; "home" journals for attractive descriptions of native dwellings; back again to the women's press for entertaining stories of strange wedding customs; and the popular semi-scientific monthlies of the character of the former *Armchair Science* for articles, specially written to appeal to the layman with a lively but inexpert knowledge, on the hundred-and-one aspects of such expeditions of discovery.

You see, I trust, how comparatively easy it is to plan not one, but a dozen possible markets for articles, all of which can be written from a single interview.

Which returns us to the title of this section. *You must plan your Markets first.*

If you were in actual fact planning to carry out this explorer interview, you would have the preliminary letters to editors written and sent off several weeks beforehand.

If any of them did not find editorial favour, no harm would be done. In fact, you would have saved yourself time and effort.

If, on the other hand, you attend the interview armed with the knowledge that half-a-dozen editors have asked to see your work, the fillip to your self-confidence is immeasurable.

Shortly after I first turned to journalism I made up my mind to interview Jack Hylton, who at that time was Britain's ace band-leader.

In addition to drawing crowded houses all over the land with his stage band he spent several months every year touring the Continent, where he played regularly in the European capitals.

Having made my decision I set about market-planning—before I had commenced even preliminary negotiations for obtaining the interview, mark you.

I had a completely open mind on subjects, and a little reflection focussed my train of thought on Royalty, which is a gilt-edged investment for the writer.

Right. How could I link up royalty with a band-leader?

The reply came quickly enough.

Part of a writer's training consists of spotting and assessing the possibilities of article-ideas behind press reports.

Every now and then I had read that Jack Hylton and his band had played at functions attended by celebrities. By noticing and remembering these reports—some of them merely three or four-line paragraphs—I was enabled to fix in my mind the first subject for the interview I hoped to get. I decided that this would be: "Royal Dancers I have played for." It did not need much knowledge to decide that such a subject would appeal to women readers rather than to men.

A study of a few current issues and I selected *Home Notes* as my first market. Such a title as I visualised stood every chance of appealing, and I was correct in my judgment. Within three days I had received a reply from the editor

stating that she would be pleased to see a signed article on this subject, and would I let her have it by a date she specified as it was intended to publish a special "royalty number" within the next two months.

Now you see a hitherto unmentioned value of the preliminary letter system. I admit that luck had taken a hand, but if I had not worked on the planned markets principle I should not have received this invaluable information with its obvious encouragement.

I felt that this interview should produce sufficient material for at least three good articles. Other minor opportunities might present themselves, but I would work for three main projects.

A little more reflection and I found myself considering how essential it is for every member of such a band to be a first-rate artist and a trained member of a team.

*Pearson's Weekly* would like that, I thought, and forthwith addressed a letter to the editor suggesting an article signed by Jack Hylton on "How I train the Boys." He fell for it.

For the third article I used as my idea germ the fact that while on his European tours the band used air travel extensively. What a vast amount of organisation must be attached to transporting, in this manner, twenty-odd bandsmen with all their unwieldy instruments and baggage, I reflected.

One paragraph in the daily press that struck me rather forcibly was this:—

"During a recent tour Jack Hylton and his band played 74 different theatres in 76 days,



and travelled a total distance of just on 25,000 miles."

There was no question as to the theme. "Flying with a Dance Band" was offered to the editor of *Popular Flying* and he received the idea with enthusiasm and asked to see the subsequent article.

I was now reasonably elated. Three editors had asked to see my work, and although these requests were not commissions, technically, I fortified my personal enthusiasm and self-confidence with the secret thought that they *were* commissions. I firmly believe that if you can reasonably build up such a bulwark of confidence in yourself the quality of your work is improved tremendously, for you set about your task in a spirit of optimism.

I duly carried out the interview and the articles sold on sight to the markets I had so carefully planned, netting me three guineas each from *Pearson's Weekly* and *Home Notes* and two guineas from *Popular Flying*.

Without this advance planning I might never have raised enough confidence to carry the job through. For remember this: each time you interview a celebrity you have a rare opportunity to build up your personal prestige and goodwill. If, a few weeks later, you can present the interviewee with a copy of a publication containing your work, you have done much to help yourself along the thorny path of progress. You can approach that man or woman again in the future, and who knows what good may come of it?

Just prior to the war I was negotiating with a leading firm of literary agents. I was to write the life story of a man whose name is a household word and whose career has been packed with colour and incident. The story would have been serialised in a Sunday newspaper, at a handsome fee.

The outbreak of hostilities torpedoed the project but the point I wish to drive home is this: I had always kept faith with this celebrity and the interviews and signed articles with which he had been gracious enough to help me had always been published in the markets I had promised.

In consequence of that he had been prepared to entrust me with the publication of his memoirs.

I could never have earned that privilege, in the face of keen competition, had I not planned my markets first in connection with the relatively unimportant work I had done for him during previous years.

### SELECTING YOUR VICTIMS.

The title of this section may sound crude and deliberate, rather like the Gestapo selecting prisoners to face the firing squad.

This business of interviewing for the popular press must be handled like any other business. Thought and care must be applied to every aspect, and no aspect can be more important than the wise and discerning selection of the people you propose to interview.

I have frequently followed a general rule which I can sum up in the few words, "Not the top of the tree." Of course there must be exceptions in special cases and I do not regard this rule by any means as unbreakable as "Plan your Markets First."

However, it is still a good one, and this is why.

You would not be so presumptuous as to attempt an interview with George Bernard Shaw, would you? And this despite the fact that a few succinct lines would net you a higher monetary reward than 10,000 words of your own work.

Similarly, you would hardly interview any celebrity whose life's work has brought him such eminence that he is beyond the range of the young and struggling writer.

There are obvious reasons for this. Kindly though he may be at heart, the limelight that he has endured for half-a-century may well make any such celebrity genuinely weary of public life and affairs, and any approach to him may be a sheer waste of time.

By the same rule, if he is a man of letters his own work will command fees that seem little short of fantastic and he cannot be blamed for reluctance in handing out material, gratis, to an unknown journalist.

Then there is the question of approach. It may be almost an impossibility for the young writer to obtain access to a man of great eminence.

Who, then, should be regarded as your most likely range of victims?

My reply to that is, in the broadest possible

sense, those who are *almost*, but not quite, at the top of their particular calling.

As an example, you might never secure an interview with the Astronomer Royal, but you might well gain access to a noted astronomer of slightly less eminence.

You might not make personal contact with the Curator of the London Zoo, but you could almost certainly obtain an interview with a Fellow of the Zoological Society who happened not to hold such an exalted appointment.

The theatrical profession is perhaps on a different plane. For many years I have moved freely in theatrical and film circles and I say in complete sincerity that I know of no more friendly body of men and women than those who people the vast world of entertainment, be they stars, executives, or technicians. In this profession, at any rate, the enterprising journalist will find a ready welcome from the lowest to the highest, always providing that he, the writer, takes pains to possess himself of a pleasant personality and to play the game with those whose collaboration he solicits.

It is because of this that I advise the tyro at this class of journalism to give particular attention to the prospect of interviewing stage stars. More as to this in a later section.

You must train yourself to watch the daily press and popular periodicals for hints and ideas for interviews. This is of inestimable value in "victim selecting."

It may help you if I quote an example from my own experience.

I once read that Miss Florence Desmond had acquired a cottage on the edge of Hatfield Forest. Just that, but it made me think.

I would gather material for an illustrated article dealing with famous people who use country cottages in their off moments. Following my rule of market planning I sent out the suggestion and in due course received an invitation from the editor of *Home Notes* to send along the article. That was the signal to get mobile.

First, I scoured the newspapers and magazines for references to well-known people who owned or were about to acquire country cottages. I found that these included Anona Winn, Mabel Constanduros, Jeanne de Casalis and John Watt.

That was a good enough line-up for a start and I decided to commence with Miss Desmond. She received me by appointment in her dressing room at a London Theatre and gave me all the facts I needed.

The friendliness of theatrical folk was once again demonstrated when, on my requesting a photograph that could be used as an illustration for the proposed article, she waved me towards a cabinet in the corner of the room and told me to go ahead and pick out all I wanted. There must have been hundreds.

One of the attractions of interview work is the exciting possibility of meetings with celebrities who may be useful to you in connection with some future work which is not even a germ in your imagination at the time of making their acquaintance. On this occasion I was introduced to a beautiful Continental dancer whose name is

legendary, and to an American musician whose gramophone record sales are fantastic. In this way I have met dozens of stars who have been able and willing to give me their co-operation at some future time, for my experience is that, having once been introduced to these good folk in the world of the theatre, you have friendly access at all times.

The contrast between the formality of ordinary business life and the informality of the entertainment artist is one of the most refreshing facts I have uncovered in twenty years of writing. But to return to our article.

I followed up the interview with Florence Desmond by seeking out, one by one, the other people I have mentioned. Lastly, I took a trip to "The Village in the Valley" where Beverley Nichols entertained me at tea and gave me carte blanche to examine the lovely old thatched cottage that has been the theme or inspiration of a whole series of his novels.

You may criticise: what a colossal amount of time and effort to put into a three-guinea article. It can't be worth it!

But it is. For not only did I keep faith with an editor and turn in an attractive article that sold at sight and occupied a two-page spread. I made enough contacts and gathered sufficient material for at least twenty articles which in due course I built up and sold at good prices.

I hope that in setting down this example in some detail I have helped you to understand and appreciate the value of careful and intelligent selection of your victims.

I repeat that it is good training to watch out for idea germs in the daily press. The smallest paragraph can often supply a hint which, with thought and planning, can be transmuted into an editor's cheque and may lead indirectly to a host of potential articles.

### DECIDING THE RIGHT ANGLE.

It is one thing to light on an idea for an article and another thing to decide on suitable markets quickly and expertly.

It is generally recognised that one of the commonest shortcomings with the average beginner is his inclination to write an article in the first flush of enthusiasm, without a thought to the market for his work.

This is excusable in the case of those who are just beginning to revel in the joy and pleasure of writing for the press, for the excitement of having found a subject and getting to work on the article may well push thoughts of possible markets in the background. But the fault gathers seriousness with the increasing experience of the writer.

I urge every beginner to regard this question of market as of at least equal importance to the writing of the article itself.

For my part I would never attempt to write an article, or to take the initial steps towards securing an interview, without first deciding on a short list of markets. And you can't tackle

markets until you have considered the class of reader to whom your article will appeal. Many subjects automatically link themselves with certain groups of markets.

Thus, any article that is essentially of male or general interest may be offered to the general press. Which brings us to another useful rule: always take the greatest possible cognisance of the feminine angle.

Take the country cottage article we have just considered. I could have compiled a list of male cottage owners, or at any rate one containing a majority of males, and such an article could have been planned to fit the general press. But I figured that this subject would make a slightly stronger appeal to women. It seemed to me that women take a somewhat keener interest in other people's homes than do men, and that this article, in view of its illustrations (one was Anona Winn examining a sundial in her garden; another, Mabel Constanduros leaning over her rustic gateway) would in any case make the best show in a women's periodical. And so the choice was made.

Once again I commend the beginner to study. Study your market; study your plan of campaign; study your subject.

You may have what appears to be a brilliant idea. Before you start working on it, stop to consider its reader-appeal. No good writing an article just because you like it. You must consider all the angles and you must decide, after the most searching reflection, whether the subject is worth pursuing. Remember, it is not only your own time that is at stake; the valuable time of



the celebrity you propose to interview is an essential factor to be taken into consideration.

#### ARRANGING FOR THE INTERVIEW.

We have covered a lot of ground before reaching the subject that heads this section. But I make the point that the context of the foregoing sections form an important lead-up to the work of obtaining the interview proper.

How does one gain access to all these famous people?

Undoubtedly the best method of approaching your prospective victims is by letter.

Headed notepaper is a wise and essential investment, providing you have met with sufficient success to warrant the description of yourself as a free-lance journalist.

Your letter should be worded on the following lines :

Dear Mr. Britano,

The editor of *Popular Weekly* has asked to see an illustrated article dealing with the trials and thrills of tight-rope walking, and as I understand you claim to have covered a grand total of 10,000 miles in that way I am wondering if you would be kind enough to grant me a few minutes one afternoon or evening this week.

Awaiting your reply with interest, and assuring you of my keenest endeavours,

I am,

Yours truly,

The idea for this article would have been gleaned from a newspaper paragraph announcing that Mr. Tony Britano, the famous wire-walker, claims to have travelled 10,000 miles on the taut wire during his twenty years as a circus and music hall performer.

I am prepared to wager that seventy-five per cent of the artists you may approach in this way will eventually grant you interviews.

For remember that, to these people, publicity is their life blood. But remember, too, that you must not let them down. They will accept you at face value and will expect you to honour your undertaking to carry the suggested article through to completion.

Within a few days the reply to your letter should come to hand. Now for a spot of self-discipline. *Whatever appointment the star makes, you must keep it.* Never mind if it comes right in the middle of an arrangement you have previously regarded as important. Remember that you are building up a career and that every contact you make is one more stepping-stone towards that success you so earnestly desire.

Don't be careless over times and dates. De Groot, the celebrated violinist, once sent me a personal letter asking me to call upon him at his hotel at 1 o'clock. I misread this as 10 o'clock and felt an utter fool when, on presenting myself at this hour, I was informed that the maestro was still in bed. I subsequently lunched with him at the time he had appointed, but I never quite forgot this example of carelessness on my part and ever afterwards I read and re-read

details of appointments in order to avoid similar foolish errors.

Unless pushed for time I have never presented myself at stage door or hotel with a request to see a proposed interviewee. In my opinion that is courting certain failure.

Arming myself with a written appointment is part of my scheme for building up a solid foundation which will ensure, as far as is humanly possible, the successful culmination of the project in hand.

How does the writer discover the whereabouts of these people?

That is one of the easiest of your problems.

Every Public Library contains a reading room in which are displayed current copies of all the daily papers and many weeklies. Among these you will find *The Stage*, the old-established professional journal containing a comprehensive list of stage stars and the theatres at which they are playing during the current week and the week to follow.

It is obvious that you can't travel hundreds of miles to carry out an interview of the type you will be qualified to attempt.

My own method is to watch these notices until I see that the star I want is visiting my own or a neighbouring town. Now this would appear to slow down your programme, and to avoid this possibility your wisest course is to delay the preliminary steps towards your article by filing the idea until you see that your victim is, in fact, visiting your district.

By constantly studying *The Stage* and other journals covering the theatrical profession you can always give yourself a fortnight's notice of such visits. That is usually quite sufficient time for submitting your idea to the editor and receiving his reply. The secret is to have the suggested article planned in detail in your Ideas Book so that you can send off your suggestion with the minimum of delay. Furthermore, aim to keep a dozen or so ideas ready for immediate attention.

So far in this section we have dealt almost entirely with stage stars, for they are the obvious subjects for your interview work and are among the easiest of famous folk to approach.

This does not mean that you should neglect other profitable channels. Outstanding among these are your local social organisations, clubs, literary and dramatic societies and so on.

Most towns have several live organisations coming within this category. In this week's issue of my local paper I see that Reginald Foort is the guest of honour at one of the church social clubs. Not so long ago a world's table-tennis champion came down and played a series of exhibition matches; while one of our go-ahead tennis clubs invariably invites champions in this sport to visit the town towards the end of the season.

You need to watch your local press closely for such opportunities. In a large community such visits of celebrities are sometimes little publicised beforehand and it is only when you read, the following week, a report of the occasion that you realise what an opportunity you have missed.

How well I remember an important Church convention that took place in my home town many years ago! I was a youthful autograph hunter at the time and I haunted the rendezvous until I had collected the autographs of about twenty bishops. Had I been old enough to follow journalistic pursuits I should have reaped a golden harvest.

### IN THE LION'S DEN.

Your first interview. How eagerly you have been looking forward to this occasion and, now that the time is at hand, how completely you are dreading it!

Let me attempt to encourage and sustain you by prophesying that the event will almost certainly pass far more smoothly and pleasantly than you had ever hoped, without any of the snags with which you have been poisoning your imagination.

We will assume that you have followed my advice and decided to commence your activities by interviewing stage celebrities appearing from time to time at your local theatre or music hall.

You have gone about the business systematically and methodically, have submitted your preliminary letters to the selected editors, and have secured a definite appointment for the interview. We will further assume that the interview is to take place in the artist's dressing room, between his stage appearances.

You set out for the meeting. In your breast pocket reposes a used envelope containing two or three letters or sheets of paper to give it bulk. You have a couple of pencils readily available. Remember, you may never use these articles, but if you can't avoid it, you must know where to drop on them without fumbling.

I have already touched on the notebook question. While I am wholly sincere when I repeat that you should not produce one during the interview, there is no reason at all why you should not carry one in your pocket.

My own preference is to hurry home after the interview and get all my thoughts on paper in the seclusion of my study; I find the short journey back is invaluable for marshalling my impressions.

My reporting days have given me a retentive memory. If you are not so sure of your ability to memorise it may suit you better to get the stuff into your notebook as soon as possible after leaving the theatre, be it on a table-top in the nearest cafe or under a street lamp-post. That's up to you. Experience will quickly teach you *your* best method.

Now you have arrived at the stage door. The next few minutes may be the worst, not only of the evening, but of your career as an interviewer. Accept that fact and think of the future. After all, you're only going to talk to another human being!

For interviewing work visiting cards are most useful. Nothing elaborate; just plain and to the point.

Stage doorkeepers are notoriously tough. They are paid to be, and many of them have had years at the game. If you try to explain who you are and what you want you may have a hard job to convince the worthy doorkeeper of your sincerity. Then there is an even chance that he will get your name wrong.

No, my friend, it is not swank to have cards printed. It is just one more stepping stone towards the successful culmination of your plans.

"I have an appointment with Mr. Blank at 8.30," you say, and hand over your card. No explanations. No bother.

The doorkeeper frowns, says "Wait 'ere" and disappears along the corridor.

You draw a deep breath.

Phase one over.

In a couple of minutes he is back.

"Step this way!"

You follow the shirt-sleeved individual along the narrow, green-painted corridor. If it is your first expedition backstage you will be on your toes to make the most of your experience. Two things will probably impress themselves forcibly upon your memory: the bareness, the draught.

You stop at a door marked Dressing Room 1. Your guide taps discreetly, pushes open the door and leaves you. A voice calls "Come in!"

This is it.

Whatever you do, *don't* register surprise.

Walk in as though you are entering your kitchen at home. Never mind that sagging sensation at the knees.

It is unlikely that your star will be alone in the room. Don't worry. I have already said that theatrical folk are among the most friendly in the world, and secretaries, dressers, personal assistants or what-have-you take no notice at all of these incursions into the privacy of the dressing room.

A quick and businesslike greeting—and it's up to you. You've probably planned how you will open the conversation.

I have always found it a sound move to mention my market in the first sentence; should you have several markets in mind, you will naturally choose the best-known.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Blank. The editor of *Popular Weekly* is quite keen on this story. I understand he's producing a special number in a few weeks and he reckons this article is just the job!"

No frills. No hesitation. You've plunged into the subject naturally and you've made it easy for the interviewee to take you up from a concrete point.

You must drill yourself to recognise that you are in the presence of a busy man, that the next fifteen minutes or so are very precious to you and that there is no time for unnecessary details.

The moment the interviewee starts speaking, clamp down and listen for all you're worth.

Your main objective should now be to *guide* the conversation, and an occasional remark or interjection is all that is necessary to this end.

If your victim is an artist of many years experience he will probably know all there is



to know about interviewing. Once the subject of the interview is established he will start talking and you will quickly—and with considerable relief—realise that your part, now that you have overcome the preliminaries and gained access to him, is both easy and pleasant.

Your receptive faculties should now be geared to their highest degree of efficiency. Oblivious to all else that may be going on in the room, you will listen to every word. Try to make yourself believe that your mind is akin to a recording apparatus and that when you get outside you will be able to play back to yourself everything that has been said.

As a result of many years experience in this work I am now able to write almost verbatim accounts of conversations at considerable length. You will find it a fascinating hobby to train your memory in this way, particularly if you do not write shorthand.

There is one very definite “don’t” which I should like to emphasise; that is, don’t have a list of cold-blooded questions to fire at your celebrity. Of course, you must come away with answers to questions that you have had in your mind, but pray don’t ask them in the unemotional manner of the County Court judge. You can get all you need to know by guiding the conversation.

Make your own remarks appear casual and spontaneous; skilfully conceal the fact that they are actually interpolated craftily and with complete deliberation. It is really no trouble at all to guide the conversation by nothing more

than a few words, *spoken at the right time*, along channels which provide you with just the information that is so vital to the shaping of your article.

In short, the ideal interview takes the form of a normal conversation, with the interviewer gently guiding it in the way he desires it to proceed, and the interviewee giving information in a natural and unforced manner.

Keep your senses fully attuned until you feel and know that you have at last absorbed sufficient material to enable you to complete your article. Then, and then only, can you relax.

It is likely that, by the time you confidently feel that your object has been achieved, the period allotted to your interview will have expired.

If that is so, a warm word of thanks to your interviewee, some brief general and friendly remarks about commonplace matters, including an expression of hope that you may have the pleasure of future collaboration, and you take your leave.

Don't wait for formalities. Don't stand hesitantly, hat in hand, waiting for the star to bid you good-night. Bid *him* good-night, shake hands, stride briskly to the door and depart.

Take the lead when you go in, keep it in your control while the interview lasts, and again take the lead for the conclusion of the talk.

By this means you will give the impression, and rightly so, of being brisk and businesslike. The interviewee will be left with the conviction

that you know your job, that you are pleasant and efficient, that you do not waste words, are not a bore, and do not fumble and hesitate. In short, he is primed to like you and to be receptive to any approaches you may make in the future.

To the forward-looking writer, this last may well be every bit as important as the interview on hand at the moment.

Now, we have threaded our way carefully and with deliberate attention to detail, through a typical interview such as the veriest beginner might experience at his first attempt. We have allowed the interview to proceed smoothly, and according to plan.

Let us now consider the effort that does *not* go according to plan.

One of the commonest and most annoying snags you will encounter is the interviewee's tendency to deviate from the path you so earnestly wish him to follow.

You may find it a little difficult to counteract this in your apprenticeship days but as you gain experience you will steadily become adept at keeping the conversation on the right track.

Notwithstanding this, there is one valuable point I should like to make here.

It is always possible that you may stumble across a brilliant idea, solely on account of the volubility of your interviewee.

No writer is infallible and I, for one, am always broadminded enough to realise that an unexpected remark may put me on the track of a brand new line of thought.

In the event of the interviewee's conversation giving you an idea for a fresh article you may find yourself in rather a fix. Shall you continue with the article for which you have attended, or shall you drop this at once and follow up the new prospect?

I think the fact that you have put in so much groundwork and have one or more editors waiting on you should give you the reply to that question.

You must work towards the successful outcome of the project in hand. There are two ways in which to tackle the idea that was not born until the celebrity started talking, and which one you choose will depend entirely on the circumstances at the time.

If you obtain all the information you need and the celebrity shows no signs of bringing the interview to a close, then let him talk as freely as he likes along his own lines.

The first time I interviewed Tommy Handley he was busily engaged in getting ready for a stage appearance. Consequently the interview was snappy and to the point, though full of meat and just what I wanted. But I had to leave as soon as I had secured all the relevant material.

In contrast to this I had an appointment with that incomparable basso, the late Mr. Jetsam, and as he and his partner, Mr. Flotsam, had just finished a broadcasting session we had a three-cornered conference in comfortable surroundings, where the time factor didn't matter a hoot.

In such circumstances I could—and did—follow up any fresh ideas that occurred as supplementaries to the initial purpose of my visit.

Similarly, when Teddy Brown was intrigued by my suggestion of an article under the title of "Fat Men are Fit Men" and invited me to call on him at the theatre he was playing at the time, I discovered the heavyweight xylophonist reclining on his special couch, clad only in trousers and singlet.

He was faced with a two-hour respite before his next performance. The result was that, after giving me all the dope necessary for this entertaining article, he branched off on to the subject of boxing, and I came away with sufficient material for other work I had not even previously thought of. You see, I was completely ignorant of Teddy's keen interest in the noble art until a chance remark gave me a hint. After that, there was no stopping him!

This system, you will observe, is entirely dependant upon the time factor.

If circumstances do not permit you to follow up any new clue, there is just one alternative.

Tell the celebrity that you have just struck a promising idea for a future article and ask him if you may see him again. I have frequently had two successive interviews within a few days as a result of such an arrangement.

If it is inconvenient, or the star is unwilling, for a further interview, it is always possible to carry out the supplementary idea by correspondence.

The potential value of meeting a famous personage is incalculable. Once you have made his or her acquaintance it is superlatively simple to build up future "interviews" by getting the facts in some form other than by personal contact.

This business of letter-writing constituted another of my early-day surprises. I have never met with anything other than courtesy in my correspondence with theatrical celebrities. It is not at all unusual to receive three or four pages of close handwriting in response to a polite request for information.

I confess that I have been amazed at this. I can only put it down to the assumption that, when on tour, these good folk find letter-writing a relief from boredom. I may be quite wrong. I can only say that my files are full of such letters.

Anyway, the fact remains that one personal interview should pack your memory cells with sufficient colour to enable you to build up a living article from an inanimate array of facts.

One important point before we round off this section.

The signature.

You will be told that you should never fail to obtain a signature to your notes. That's all very well—if you take notes.

I have endeavoured to explain why you should not take notes during an interview. Even though you do, they will probably be little more than cryptic heiroglyphics.

In that event they will hardly be worthy of a signature.

My own system is to send the *completed manuscript* along to the interviewee at the earliest possible moment.

It will come back signed.

This is infinitely better than a signature to a few marks on the back of an envelope.

### THE PERFECT MANUSCRIPT

I have already made a passing reference to my own method of hurrying home and getting my thoughts on paper with the least possible delay. In this connection I have one invaluable hint to offer you. Whether you write under the nearest lamp-post or in the comfort of your home, get *everything possible* down in black and white as soon as you can. *Never* leave it till next morning, even though it means writing into the small hours.

The facts that you have taken so much trouble to collect are too precious to be given the chance of losing themselves in the inner recesses of your mind.

Should the interview take place late in the evening, as it may well do, the temptation may be strong for you to get to bed and start on the article next day, when your mind is fresh. You will never make a greater mistake. Many a time I have not left the B.B.C. till nearly midnight, but I have never failed to get my stuff

on paper the same night. There is one consolation: it does not matter two hoots how fast you write, or how crude your rough MS. is as a result.

Don't even think of polishing the article, then. The moment you put the last full stop, shove the thing in a drawer and go to bed. It won't matter if you don't look at it again for a couple of days.

When at length you settle down to write the first draft of the article proper, allow yourself sufficient time to complete it. Concentration is the keynote of perfection. This is specially so in this class of work, when you are steeling yourself to recapture your reactions and emotions. For although you will have your rough notes in front of you, you can always improve.

You may have taken my advice and made tentative editorial arrangements for two or three different articles.

In this event, take them one at a time. Number one will, of course, be the article you are most anxious to see in print. The physical work of writing varies between authors. Some write everything direct on to the typewriter, even the first draft.

Having never been more than a two-finger typist, I have always used handwriting for each draft except the final one, and I commend this system to anyone else "in my street." You can slash and erase as freely as you like with pen or pencil and when you eventually get to the machine the process of typing consists of no more than straightforward copying.



The vexed question of revision seems always to take up a good deal of space in most general text books on writing.

I found it a problem, in my early days, to know just where to stop this revision business. You can go on and on. This is where you must develop your self-confidence, which is the only factor upon which you can rely when you are pondering over your finished work.

I noticed that my more experienced colleagues were getting MSS. written and posted off to editors while I was still in the throes of more and yet more revision. I decided that a whole lot of self-discipline was necessary and that henceforth I would limit my revision to three stages—(a) the first rough draft, (b) the carefully-composed handwritten draft and (c) the final typed MS.

This may not fit in with your own ideas or mental outlook. You may be quicker, or slower. But I do know that the over-conscientious beginner may well devote an abnormal amount of time to revision and, even then, may despatch his MS. in a state of uncertainty as to whether it is, after all, his best work.

Well, tyro, you've got to stop somewhere. So after the first few months of practical experience try to establish within yourself such self-confidence that you can send off your work, forget it, and knuckle down to the next job in hand.

The perfect manuscript is clean, fresh and flawless. *Never* send out an article with an alteration in it. It is time well spent to re-type

a page for the sake of a single word. You won't have to re-type the entire manuscript, remember.

Type your pages intelligently, so that you can readily make minor corrections. By this I mean that you should never so cram them with type-script that you can't alter a few words on one page without carrying the alteration on to the following page. Make a point of finishing a sentence as often as possible at the foot of a page, even though this may sometimes mean a couple of inches of space below it.

You will know, of course, that you should not start Page 1 till nearly halfway down the sheet, and that a clear left-hand margin of one to one-and-a-half inches should be left on every page.

Some writers type their name and address on the last page as well as on the first. I have never followed this rule, but if you feel that it is another step towards preventing the loss of your MS., by all means do it.

The really important thing is to put your name and address neatly in the top right-hand corner of Page 1. Never omit a title page; just a repeat of your name and address as above, plus the title of the article across the centre, and the length stated towards the bottom of the sheet, preferably towards the right-hand corner.

These points may seem trivial. Some people will tell you that, providing your article is meaty enough, an editor will accept it no matter what it looks like. Maybe so, but you must remember that every care you can possibly take may help

to attract the attention of a harrassed editor, and if you spare no effort to turn out your MS. in professional style you are at least taking one more step towards compelling an editor to take more than a cursory interest in your work.

### THE SIGNED ARTICLE

You will soon find that two outlets for your activities present themselves for consideration.

These are :—

- (a) The Signed Article.
- (b) The Straight Interview.

Let us take them in that order.

The signed article is, as its name implies, an article that is published under the name of the celebrity concerned.

It must be obvious that the personal expressions, views, or adventures of celebrated people are more valuable, in editorial eyes, than similar views expressed by an unknown scribe, no matter how good his work may be.

It is precisely that fact which causes the progressive free-lance to tackle this sphere of literary activity.

Then it is equally obvious that this particular form of article must be written from start to finish in the first person. You must get inside the skin of your interviewee and write that

article just as though you are in actual fact the person interviewed.

I think you will find that this style of article is, by its very nature, easy to write.

The usual rules will apply.

For instance, you will select a sensational fact, an appealing remark or an arresting statement to appear in your first paragraph. Let me reproduce one or two, picked at random from my scrapbooks.

“Smack! I aimed the front wheels of the baby sports car at the perpendicular wall, but in a flash was back on the floor again. Then the wall, floor, wall, floor . . . .

“I realised with a sudden surge of panic that I couldn't think as quickly as I was moving, couldn't brake, couldn't hold her . . . .”

“I often hear people remark that the boys in my band have an easy time—just wander on to the stage, take their places and play a few numbers, then wander off again.

“Never have they been more mistaken, for the life of a first-class bandsman is one long rush.”

“What does it feel like to ride the Wall of Death? is a question I am asked a dozen times a day.”

“To be the owner of the largest troupe of performing dogs in this country—perhaps

in Europe—is in the nature of a mixed blessing.”

From such openings as these you can proceed smoothly with the body of your article, alternating interesting facts with amusing incidents and occasional carefully selected anecdotes calculated to serve the double purpose of raising a smile to the lips of your reader and to relieving monotony. In short, your normal literary skill comes into full play.

Your ending should be every bit as attractive as your opening.

Your aim throughout, as in all your journalistic writings, should be to *compel* the reader to start reading your article, by an arresting opening sentence; to *maintain* his interest throughout the body of the article by entertaining and vivid writing; and to ensure that he lays down the article with a feeling of having been lightly entertained and, perhaps, of having had brought to his notice, pleasantly and unobtrusively, several interesting facts of which he was not previously aware.

Before you despatch your work to the editorial office you will proceed to get it vetted and signed by the celebrity.

To this end you will send the carbon copy of the article to the interviewee by post, under cover of a polite note typed on your headed paper, expressing your thanks for the courtesy extended to you, and asking the celebrity to kindly read through the MS., sign same, and return it to you in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

When I say "carbon copy" I am assuming that you will take such pride in your work that the copy is almost as perfect in appearance as the original. *Never* allow those horrible disfiguring creases to appear on your carbons.

It is misplaced economy to bash the last ounce out of your carbon paper, so that your copies are almost illegible. As a journalist you must come to regard your carbon copies as valuable and must see that they are a credit to you. MSS. may well get lost in their journeyings and if an editor asks you for a duplicate you must be in a position to produce one without having to cudgel your brains over the original phraseology.

The reason for sending a copy for signature is that it is unwise to send the signed original to your editor in the first instance. You should send the editor the unsigned top copy and inform him, in your covering letter, that you hold a duplicate bearing the signature of the celebrity in question.

To ensure that the celebrity understands what he is doing you should type the words: "Read and approved" neatly at the foot of the MS. you send him. On receiving it back, duly signed, your troubles are at an end. The haunting fears of libel and innaccuracy disappear like snow in the sun. The responsibility rests for evermore on the shoulders of the signatory.

There is one point in connection with the signed article which I must not fail to mention. It is sometimes maintained that an article, published under the name of a person who did not in

fact write it, is a hypocritical affair that should be shunned by all conscientious journalists.

Well, that's one side of the question; it is so worthy and of such high ideal that I will not attempt to argue against it.

I will just show you how to overcome it.

The three little words, "In an interview," are all that is necessary.

These words may be inserted by the editor at the top of the printed article without any detrimental effect on the work as a whole.

### THE STRAIGHT INTERVIEW

I have called this "the straight interview" to distinguish it from the signed article which appears throughout in the first person.

In the straight interview the journalist has the facility to give himself as much, or as little, space as he desires.

Variety in your writing is ever a valuable asset. The intermingling of your victim's statements with your own speech enables you to achieve just this variety.

I have found the interview-article very pleasing to write.

The advantages are that you can make the most of your impressions of the interview, can mention the little idiosyncracies of your victim and can refer to the surroundings and general atmosphere in a way that is not possible with the signed article.

It is because I feel my object of showing you how to build up your own future articles is more likely to be achieved that I deliberately refer to one or two published interviews rather than dip haphazardly into a larger number. Please then, excuse me for referring again to the following; it will serve as a practical example of the way in which you can effectively intermix your material and style.

The article opened like this :—

“ Most people of sixteen stone consider themselves a trifle on the chubby side; eighteen stone, fat; twenty stone, very fat. I weigh nearly twenty-five and feel as fit as any man.”

Teddy Brown crossed one leg over the other, and sipped his coffee. He had just left the stage at the London Palladium and was reclining on the settee in his dressing room, minus everything but his singlet and dress trousers.”

You see at once the advantage of this intermingling of direct speech with descriptive material. You break up what, in signed article form, would be a solid page of first person. This makes for easier reading and has the added advantage of conveying to the reader those little snatches of atmosphere and local colour that add so much to the intimacy of the article.

Take this further example of an interview with the world's high-kicking champion. This was the opening; as it appeared in a Sunday newspaper.



“ . . . . 97, 98, 99, 100.”

“ A burst of applause as the velvet curtains sweep down majestically in front of a supple young body, fascinatingly white under the circle of brilliant stage lights, delicate, unprotected toes still tracing out that perfect semi-circle from the floor to the imaginary spot immediately above her golden head.”

Descriptive material conveying atmosphere, you see. A short paragraph later I embarked on the interview proper, with the use of reported speech.

“ With two houses a night I reach 1,300 high kicks every week, not counting practice and rehearsals . . . .

“ Actually, I have established four different records, including 50 high kicks in 25 seconds, 100 in 49 seconds, and 1050 in 20 minutes. But the sternest test of all was the endurance record, when I accomplished 3,000 kicks in an hour and a half.”

Just a reversal of the Teddy Brown style. It matters little whether you commence your article with description or dialogue, so long as you intelligently intersperse your main body of reported speech with nicely-turned snatches of descriptive material.

You must aim to reproduce the right atmosphere. This can sometimes be done by sketching in the background first, then introducing the main character. Show him or her doing

something or, alternatively, recovering from the effects of some exhausting activity.

By this means you are most likely to capture your reader's sympathy and to win his interest in what the character is, or has just been, doing.

## SYMPOSIUMS

A very interesting and lucrative angle on this interviewing business is that which comes under the above heading.

This means a collection of short articles, or interviews, by a number of well-known people, published under a single general heading.

In this connection I can hardly do better than direct your attention to pages 168-171 of Mr. G. J. Matson's "Guide to Article Writing." This writer is one of the most versatile freelances of the day and he has made a speciality of symposiums.

In his Guide he describes how he conceived the idea of a symposium, for *Tit-Bits*, on the subject, "When we were Fooled," to be published round about April 1st. He approached a number of stage stars, collected 150-200 words from each, and in due course the symposium was published.

Briefly, that is the long and short of symposium work.

Among those which I have handled are:—

“ My Best Golf Story ” by six famous comedians.

“ My Hottest Two Minutes ” by six international goalkeepers.

“ My Most Embarrassing Moment ” by a selection of well-known actresses.

“ My First £100 ” by several business magnates whom I selected, very carefully, because they were ‘ self-made ’ men.

The advantages of symposiums are multiple.

First, a good symposium will always sell, and at a good price.

Secondly, you can collect the material casually when carrying out interview work for other purposes.

Remember, you need only a very brief article. A last-minute question fired at a celebrity at the close of an interview will sometimes produce all the information you require.

Thirdly, owing to the brevity you are likely to meet with a favourable response if you approach your celebrity in writing. He won’t mind sending you a single-page reply, which will be all you need.

Incidentally, an editor often likes to print a photograph of each celebrity mentioned in a symposium. This fills up the article and adds to the attractiveness of its finished form.

Bear the possibility of symposiums in mind, then, when carrying out your interviews.

I have often collected the first four stories by personal contact, made sure that they formed a good strong backbone for the symposium in my mind and then, to save time, have collected

the last two or three stories by correspondence.

Mr. Matson's "April Fool" symposium prompts me to remind you to watch the seasons.

You have often read those hardy annuals, such as "How I shall spend my Summer Holiday" and "My Favourite Christmas Party Game." They are hackneyed, but they still appear.

Surely you can think up some equally saleable but less obvious subjects for this class of work.

Try it! You'll find it well worth while.

## THE RIGHT USE OF PICTURES

Never miss a picture.

That, though I say it as shouldn't, is sound advice.

You will find that those people who are dependant upon publicity for their worldly progress are usually perfectly willing to let you have photographs for publication.

This is particularly so in the case of theatrical folk.

These pictures enhance the value of your journalistic writing to a considerable degree. The prints themselves are perfect for reproduction.

Although it is true that an editor, with his special connections, can usually obtain photographs from the agencies it is far better that you should submit your article complete with half-a-dozen first-class pictures for him to choose from.

For although these prints are supplied gratis to you, the editor will often pay generously for the right to reproduce them.

Apart from the financial aspect, it may well be that a photograph or two will make the difference between rejection and acceptance, and even though it may be a market where the editor is unwilling to pay for such illustrations, that fact alone makes it well worth your while to give the picture angle the attention it merits.

### PROFITABLE OFF-SHOOTS

I have constantly repeated the need for you to be alive to opportunity.

This section is so headed because the sidelines which are within your power to exploit are indeed profitable. Here are some of them.

#### *Secondary Articles.*

These constitute so wide a variety that they are difficult to detail.

The best advice I can give you is to keep your eyes and ears open and *never* neglect an opportunity.

The study of practical example is, in my opinion, of more lasting value than the passing knowledge gained from the straight reading of text books. Let me therefore present you with one or two more examples from my own experience.

After playing a game of cards in his dressing-room with Norman Long I was about to take

my leave when I noticed a postcard-size photograph of the recording star with the cutest little puppy in his arms.

That started it.

Ten minutes later Norman had told me the story of his pet and I had departed with a copy of the photograph in my pocket.

I had sold the obvious article on "Stars and their Dogs" many moons previously, so that was out.

Then came the Idea, rather like Chad peeping over a wall.

Plenty of people, well-known and otherwise, had had their names tacked on to articles about their dogs. But had any writer worked out the idea of an article *by* a dog *about* his master?

I did not think so. At all events, the thought was worth pursuing.

Then I turned on that other process that is most aptly described as "thinking in series." The reaction was positive.

I would investigate and consider all the dog stories connected with famous people, reverse the angle and turn them into a series entitled "What my Master has done for Me."

I approached half-a-dozen famous dog-owners, wrote the first stories and submitted them, with photographs and a list of the celebrities who would be featured in subsequent articles, to the editor of a go-ahead journal devoted to the interests of dog-lovers. He jumped at the idea and offered three guineas per 850-word article for a series to last twelve months.

This worthwhile series was thus the direct result of a secondary train of thought; when I glimpsed that photograph I had already secured the information which formed the initial purpose of my visit to Norman.

*Paragraph-writing.*

A paying outlet which is often neglected by the aspiring writer lies in the writing and marketing of paragraphs.

Many national publications include a Gossip Page in their make-up or, at least, a gossip column.

The beginner at writing for the press may well labour under the delusion that these columns are the exclusive territory of the staff journalist.

While it is true that one man may be in charge of the feature, it is by no means true that he writes every word himself. It would indeed be a harrassing task for any man to carry out the physical work of collecting and checking the facts and information contained in these columns and finally writing the kaleidoscopic assortment of short articles that comprise such a feature.

The fact is that there is a fair opening for outside contributions to these markets.

It is possible for a free-lance to make a reasonable income from this class of work, but although encouraging statements are sometimes made in text-books on writing it is my view that the ordinary writer is not likely to raise sufficient enthusiasm to make this any more than a side-line.

However, even as a side-line the possibilities merit the attention of the interviewer, if only on account of the fact that he is in a comparatively favourable position to pick up suitable information.

You will note that much of the material contained in these paragraphs concerned outstanding personalities. This is your cue.

Remember how I suggested you should fire a casual question at your interviewees in order to acquire information for symposiums? In a similar manner you can acquire facts and interesting tit-bits as the nuclei of gossip paragraphs.

It is easy to discover a star's hobby, favourite sport or interest. Small items based on such facts will often provide a lead to paragraph material.

As I entered a famous concert singer's room on one occasion he tenderly closed the book he was reading and rose to greet me. Before I left I discovered that the book was "The Count of Monte Cristo," that Alexandre Dumas was the singer's favourite author, and that he had read and re-read almost everything that came from that writer's pen. In view of the artist's distinctive nationality this little item lent itself to paragraph work right away and was duly dealt with on these lines.

The essential condition of this work is that your statements must be accurate. These gossip paragraphs are read by a wide variety of people and its no use your offering to an editor something which has been passed on to you second-hand and which you have not checked.



Indeed, accuracy must be one of the most religiously-observed rules of every writer, whatever his sphere or speciality.

In paragraph writing you must be doubly careful when reproducing the remarks or actions of a famous personage. You can do untold harm to your career if your writing, be it only a short paragraph, contains statements which later call for apologies.

This is one form of writing where you *can't* take refuge behind someone else's signature!

### *Anecdotes.*

These can either be included in gossip columns or sent to those popular weeklies that publish a page of them at regular intervals.

You cannot spend an hour in the company of theatricals without enriching your vocabulary of anecdotes. How you use them is up to you. But its just as well to remember that every fresh one you hear may be worth from five shillings to a guinea.

Every time a popular weekly opened one of those "Have you heard this one?" readers' features that used to run for incredible periods, I dipped into my collection and every so often received a 'prize' at no more expense than a postcard and a stamp.

A very minor off-shoot, no doubt, but the payment averaged anything up to ten guineas a thousand!

## INTERVIEW YOUR FRIENDS

I do hope that by now even the veriest beginner is reassured as to his prospects of achieving an increasing measure of success in practical interviewing.

Lest there be one or two who are still inclined to fight shy of approaching celebrities let me show you how you can make money from interviewing without the mental and psychological exertion necessary to approach famous names.

The word interview almost invariably conjures up a picture of an ordinary person "interviewing" a personage in a higher walk of life. In other words, a journalist talking to an academician, a famous scientist, or a Cabinet minister.

We hardly stop to consider that an ordinary person may interview another ordinary person. You talk with another person, you don't interview him, or so popular usage has it.

That, of course, is erroneous. As correspondent to a national weekly I have interviewed scores of winners of popular competitions, from cross-words to football pools. These good folk have ranged from company directors to farm labourers, from retired businessmen who have made competitions their hobby to out-of-works who have had to borrow the sixpenny entrance fee.

Yet they have all been interviews in the truest sense and, I may tell you, have in some cases taxed my ingenuity far more than my approaches to people whose names are universally familiar.

Now the subject of this section is important

because it aims to show how *every* writer, wherever he may live, can indulge in profitable interviewing even though his geographical position, or his natural shyness may, despite his efforts and good intentions, prevent him from mixing with 'famous names.'

*Interview your friends, your neighbours, your colleagues.*

That is the answer.

This is in complete contrast to the possibilities we have so far surveyed. But let me say at once that this aspect of the subject is not one degree less interesting.

Let us review your friends.

Your hobby is writing, isn't it? Good enough. What is the hobby of your friend, Jack Smith?

Why, he keeps canaries, you reply, after a deal of thinking.

That's an almost inexcusable fault, for a start. Having to *think* for an answer to this question, I mean.

You, as a wide-awake writer, should not need to hesitate and reflect in order to answer such a question as this. You should *know*.

Anyway, we've made a start. You think that Jack Smith keeps canaries.

What is the longest period you have ever spent with him while he is at work with his canaries? How many birds has he?

If your reply to the first question is "five minutes" and to the second "I don't know," then you must indeed review your ideas if you ever want to make money as a journalist.

Let me take you in hand for a few moments

and show you just how much material value lies behind your vague impression that "Jack Smith keeps canaries."

We'll take a walk round to his place one Sunday morning. At the back of his house is the outbuilding that houses his stock. Now to get an idea of the number of birds your friend keeps. You thought maybe it was about a dozen.

Your eye roams the neat array of cages, with their outsides carefully enamelled black and their insides gleaming light blue or green. You count them.

Eight cages on the top rack, eight below, facing you. Along each side a pair of very wide cages.

The single cages each contain a single bird. The flight cages houses six birds each.

A grand total of forty birds.

Why, if Jack Smith keeps that number, how many canaries are watched over by all the fanciers in your district?

You get Jack talking.

The local Cage Bird Society, he tells you, numbers over a hundred members. At the annual show between four and five hundred birds are exhibited. The prize money, usually expended on silver cups and special prizes, is considerable; so is the cost of running the show.

For fanciers all over the country send in their birds in the same way that he, Jack Smith, sends his own entries to shows as far away as Scotland.

In reply to your question as to how they travel such distances during the winter months your

friend produces one of his own travelling cases, a well-made box, partitioned to hold two small cages and marked on the top, "Live Birds, with Care."

You discover that these birds are sent by rail; that Club secretaries receive them at their destinations, feed them and water them, give them as much care and attention as they would their own birds, place them on show in their proper classes, duly labelled and recorded and, after the show, return them by rail to their owners. Thus you become aware, for the first time, that a bird fancier can, and does, exhibit his birds at shows all over the country without himself stirring any further than the local railway station.

You ask Jack Smith if he can sell you a bird for thirty shillings. His reply stuns you. These birds, he says, are all champion stock and the lowest price at which they ever change hands is five pounds. Why, only last Sunday he sold two hens for twelve pounds each and bought a beauty for fifteen.

That casual report gives you a startling insight into the strength of the fancy from the financial angle.

You then think of the famous Crystal Palace Show and your mind recalls that you read a newspaper report referring to a total entry of 4,000 birds at one of these vast annual organisations.

You observe Jack Smith at work in his shirt-sleeves and white apron. You see how carefully he mixes the birds' food and, the journalist in

you now thoroughly awakened, you question him as to the composition of this.

You learn about colour-feeding—that by introducing certain elements into the foodstuff the colour of a bird's plumage can be changed and controlled.

You are astonished and, perhaps, amused to discover that these prize-winning birds are bathed as carefully as any baby, that their claws are kept trimmed with nail-scissors, and that if they fall ill they are treated with bread-and-milk in which has been sprinkled some powdered bismuth, or, perhaps, a few drops of halibut oil.

You've spent half-an-hour in the bird room. You emerge with your head bursting with facts. You have visions of sparkling and enlightening articles in the popular press, under your name.

In short, you have interviewed your friend.

Pleasant enough, isn't it?

You will have other friends with equally fascinating hobbies.

Interview them all.

Quite apart from interesting popular articles which you can so easily write, the specialist press must loom largely in your journalistic eye.

It is not suggested that you can, after half-an-hour's chat, write technically-perfect articles that are acceptable to men and women who have worked in and studied such specialised subjects for years.

It is, however, feasible that, once having dipped into such a subject in the way just

described, you can develop these contacts with your friends and study the subject, in close conjunction with the practical aspect, until your knowledge is sufficient to enable you to place semi-technical articles from time to time in the specialised press.

So much for hobbies.

How about your friends' work?

The scope in this connection is practically unlimited.

Taxi-drivers, policemen, travellers, railway employees, hotel receptionists, hotel and store detectives, registrars, all such people are in constant touch with every phase of the human element and they all have interesting experiences to relate.

Get them to recount these experiences to you; they may well mean additional editors' cheques in your banking account.

There are two ways of handling these sources of material, and they depend to a considerable extent upon the characters and personalities of your individual friends.

The more reserved type will not be drawn. In his case you must be prepared to have patience. Material for articles can only be obtained at intervals, in quiet and intimate conversation. You must train yourself to memorise, and ultimately record, these facts. Then, when you have the makings of an article you can get it down on paper and submit it to your friend for verification.

Articles such as "Twenty Years as an East-end Registrar" and "Pity the Rent Collector"

are easy to write providing you have the necessary ingredients of arresting openings and sensational endings.

Your second group of acquaintances includes the man whom you can take into your confidence. To him, you can divulge your intentions. He will be the type to enter into the idea with zest and enthusiasm. He will need only a word from you to delve into his mind for suitable material, and to memorise and recount future happenings for your benefit. Not only that: he will most probably suggest to you ideas for further articles.

Very obviously the moral is—interview your friends.

It pays handsome dividends.

*The Expert, too.*

There is a subtle difference between interviewing friends and acquaintances with specialised knowledge, and dealing with experts.

By "experts" I refer to any man or woman who has achieved distinction in his or her chosen profession, or who holds an important office in an academic or scientific organisation.

It is only commonsense that a writer should interview any such person if the work on which he is engaged calls for specialised knowledge. I have never failed to receive the most courteous and helpful treatment from experts attached to trade, industrial and business organisations, and I strongly advise any aspiring writer never to hesitate about approaching such people.

In the majority of cases your approach will be by letter. You may be assured of a practical



response. By this means I have been enabled to contribute highly technical articles to the specialised press, sometimes upon subjects of which my personal knowledge has been but sketchy.

By way of a single example let me quote Canadian National Railways. From the London office of this vast organisation a writer may obtain information upon any subject concerning the Dominion of Canada.

On one occasion I asked for data concerning one of Canada's industries.

Within a few days I received a comprehensive budget of factual information, an official publication containing a mass of technical detail, a variety of photographs ideal for reproduction, and a *special signed article* by one of Canada's leading industrialists.

I had not asked for the last item; in fact, the idea had not occurred to me. But you may imagine I put it to good use. It was, in fact, just the job!

Now there is a vastly different group of experts always at your elbow. I refer to the multifarious grades of workers who are, in every sense of the word, experts.

These include postmen, dustmen, fishermen, coastguards, park attendants, gamekeepers, and so on.

Just reflect for a moment on this handful of workers, listed at complete random as they came into my mind. The list could be extended to cover several pages.

I don't think there is any need for me to dwell further upon this subject.

The popular periodicals use articles almost every week which have some connection with the work, lives and experiences of the average man.

Let me just leave it at that. It is up to you to interview these good folk—not in the strict or technical sense, but informally and in a friendly and unorthodox manner.

#### CASH-IN ON LOCAL CELEBRITIES

Now let us consider another outlet for your interviewing abilities. Forget the national publications and signed articles for a time and focus your attention upon the local newspapers.

Does your local weekly publish a 'Personal' column?

It almost certainly does.

How carefully do you read that column?

Don't tell me you skip it, with perhaps only a wry grimace when you see that old Jos. Chandler, the local ironmonger, left over £12,000. Rather a surprise, that, though of course the old boy started up his business from nothing, fifty years ago, and by sheer hard work and application built up the biggest hardware business for twenty miles around . . . .

What are the paragraph headings in the current edition of my local weekly?

"New Chief Constable takes over."

"Local Parks Superintendent gets key post at Kew."

"Well-known Resident's Golden Wedding."

"Ticket Collector retires after Thirty Years."

"Oldest Inhabitant recalls local Witchcraft Legends."

"Councillor's Son takes Degree."

Now, what are the possibilities? If you have never studied the column you may begin to realise what you have been missing.

Let us examine it, item by item.

"New Chief Constable takes over."

A key word is—Birthplace.

If your local paper prints personal items, so, indeed, do other similar publications. And that, again, is your cue.

You may or may not be able to interview the Chief Constable in a practical sense, but as a resident of some years standing you will undoubtedly have sufficient information concerning this local celebrity to enable you to build up a saleable item for the local paper serving his birthplace.

"Local Parks Superintendent gets key post at Kew."

Your chances brighten. Here is a potential interview that you can tackle quite readily. Get along and see him, learn *his* birthplace, find out the towns at which he has worked during his career.

Did he marry a local girl? If not, here is one more angle you can tackle—a paragraph to the local paper published in his wife's home

town. Has any other local Parks Superintendent achieved such outstanding promotion? Incidentally, what are his qualifications, and what branch of horticulture will claim his attention at Kew? There are plenty of facts connected with this item.

“Well-known Resident’s Golden Wedding.”

This is always a meaty subject. From your point of view you must hope that neither party is a native of your town and that they each come from a different part of the country.

Here, again, you should be able to obtain an interview without the slightest difficulty.

Trace the career of the husband. In all probability he achieved some eminence in his particular sphere. On an occasion like this the couple will probably be only too pleased to recall the details of their romance. Quite a good story—two stories—here.

“Ticket Collector retires after Thirty Years.”

No explanation should be needed here. A ready-made story just waits for you. The subject of this item will no doubt be feeling at peace with the world. You will get more than a paragraph from this. Whether the ticket collector is a native of your town or not, you can place quite a useful story.

Get the man to recall his experiences; to compare the rush and bustle of railway services to-day with the conditions of years ago. Pack the article with interesting and amusing anecdotes. Finally, get tributes from one or two local railway travellers of many years standing. Get them to dwell upon the employee’s unfailing

cheerfulness and courtesy—with reference to the fact that the collector always wore a buttonhole, winter and summer alike . . . .

“Oldest Inhabitant recalls local Witchcraft Legends.”

Be careful here. It is a crime to lift another writer's work, but there is no copyright in facts. The best thing you can do in this case is to file away the cutting for future use. As and when the oldest inhabitant shuffles off this mortal coil you will have something to work on for an article on ancient lore from a local angle. Alternatively, the information contained in this report will be useful to you to supplement other material you may be collecting on the subject. Moral: never neglect an opportunity of adding to your cuttings file.

“Councillor's Son takes Degree.”

I have given you sufficient guidance on this particular class of personal information now, I think. Again you would confirm the councillor's birthplace and submit a paragraph to the appropriate market.

Although it might be argued that such work does not come strictly under the heading of interviewing, the extent to which you exploit the possibilities lies entirely in your hands. In some cases you will have sufficient general knowledge to make up a paragraph, but in all cases you can, if you wish, go out for a much more comprehensive story and seek a special interview with the person named. Your course of action will depend largely upon the importance of the topic, and the prospective market.

In the case of a person achieving eminence or distinction in your home town and hailing originally from a remote village or township you should find it profitable to interview him fully with every prospect of placing quite a fair article in the local press serving his native district.

In the case of a city-born personality you may have to be satisfied with a paragraph.

At all events it is interesting work and the material reward is comparatively easy to come by.

Small papers welcome the right material. They are as interested in the achievements of their sons and daughters in distant places as are the national dailies in the deliberations of the United Nations Organisation.

Remember that, and profit by it.

So far I have referred specifically to local newspapers. There is, however, another and even more lucrative field which you can tackle in this connection. I refer to the Trade Press.

Almost every trade and profession in existence has its own special publication, and up-to-date news and information concerning the people engaged in those trades and professions is their life-blood. This is where you can step in.

Work on the same lines as you would in the case of local newspapers.

To check back for a moment. We have dealt with a Chief Constable, a Parks Superintendent, a ticket collector, a councillor's son, and a man celebrating his golden wedding. Surely, here are five openings to the trade press, that may

be exploited for paragraphs; each of the last two local worthies will have his particular trade or business connections as a background.

Very well, then. You should see at once the obvious openings for paragraphs and news items.

There is one way in which the trade press has a decided pull over the local newspaper, from your personal angle as a prospective contributor.

This lies in the fact that a member of their brotherhood need not achieve worldly eminence or distinction in order to warrant a mention in their pages. Any change of appointment, any move, any new idea or successful innovation in business methods is sufficient in itself to interest the readers of this class of periodical.

Thus a new field of thought is opened up for you.

Did you notice that the well-known stationers and booksellers in the High Street changed hands recently? Or that Smith & Jones have pulled out their old shop front and are installing the latest thing in invisible glass?

And did you see the "Sold By" in the windows of that derelict row of shops in John Street? Rumour has it that Mason's, the furnishers next door, have acquired these properties with a view to extending their premises and making them into the most spacious showrooms in the district.

Well, what do you intend to do about it?

I suggest that you take a look through your copy of *Writers' and Artists' Year Book*. There, you will find that *Furnishing Trades Organiser* accepts short articles and news relative to the

trade, and that *Furniture Record* welcomes news contributions; furthermore, each publication pays good rates.

Continue your search through its pages and you will find that each of the trades concerned in the above current instances has its journal. So your course of action is obvious.

You interview the proprietor or manager of each of the stores and you pick up sufficient facts for a set of attractive paragraphs, which you proceed to submit to the editors of the journals in question.

Maybe they will be published in their original form, or maybe the editor will write back to you and direct you to investigate the circumstances more fully and submit a really worthwhile article. For in this class of journal an item which merits only a few lines in a newspaper often extends to a full page interview, with a photograph of the principal or the premises included.

It is possible for a writer to increase his income considerably by intelligent attention to the needs of the trade press. Which brings me to an important aspect of the subject.

Become local correspondent for as many trade publications as you can.

This is not so difficult as it sounds.

Write to the editors of all the trade journals you can discover, specify the area you can cover and ask if you may represent their papers locally.

The vast majority of your replies will point out that they are satisfactorily represented already, but if you score with only two or three



it will at least be a start. And it is more than probable that the editors of some of the journals already represented will conclude their letters by saying that they will nevertheless be prepared to consider unsolicited contributions from your pen and, if they use them, will pay for them. In such cases it is up to you to show initiative and enterprise, to secure and send in stories at regular and frequent intervals.

There is the ever-present possibility that the official correspondent may move from the district or may relinquish his appointment through pressure of other work. If you have been sending in fresh and original work, the chances are that the editor will look no further when it becomes necessary for him to appoint a successor.

As a Southerner, one of the first things I did when embarking upon a literary career was to get myself appointed correspondent to certain Northern newspapers, and I found it relatively easy to submit sufficient paragraphs and personal items to pay for my postage and stationery.

If you can become an accredited correspondent to one of the journals catering for the theatrical profession you will do yourself a good turn financially. The value of theatre tickets with which I have been issued during fifteen years of this class of work runs into many hundreds of pounds.

There is one more group of journals to which I commend your attention as a further potential outlet for your local activities as an interviewer. I refer to the several popular periodicals that print interviews with competition winners.

At the time of writing this section the number of these publications is strictly limited on account of paper control, but it may be assumed that those which dropped such features during the war years may in due course resume them, and other suspended publications may re-appear. In the hey-day of literary contests such journals included *Everybody's*, *The Leader*, *The Winner* and *Guide & Ideas*. Not only did they cater for those whose interests lay in crosswords, fashion competitions, "Bullets" and suchlike pastimes. A good deal of space was devoted to football pools, where the prizes were, and still are, often sensational.

I found it no trouble at all to secure the appointment of local correspondent to one of these publications; in fact, I could have represented two of them in my area, but as they were keen rivals I decided that such a dual representation might only create difficulties.

This was a case where I felt that the adage, 'No man can serve two masters,' should definitely be adhered to, and I only mention the incident to encourage those who may hesitate to apply for local appointments. It is my experience that, far from being snubbed, you will stand at least an equal chance of being welcomed with open arms.

This business of interviewing competition winners has proved itself to be simple, interesting and profitable. My instructions were always received by telegram. As the interviewees invariably resided locally, to locate them was easy. And in view of the fact that they had

“just won a packet” they were only too ready to talk.

I have interviewed more than a hundred competition winners and as the average time taken, including carrying out the interview and writing it up, was usually no more than half-an-hour, the payment of 10/6d., per interview was liberal.

It is therefore with confidence that I recommend you to keep your eyes open for opportunities in this connection, and as soon as you learn of a new publication catering for competitors, or an existing publication starting a new feature on these lines, get your application away without delay.

If you mean to make headway in the writing game you cannot have too many contacts, and even though the monetary rewards from some of these connections are of modest proportions, the sum total will make an appreciable contribution to the credit side of your accounts book.

## STUDIO INTERVIEWS

You can't just barge into a film studio, it's true, but as a go-getting interviewer you should make it your business to gain the entree to as many British studios as are within your range of activity.

The best way to achieve this is to get a few articles into the popular film press and then make

yourself and your work known to the studio publicity staffs.

Once again I have nothing but the highest praise for the treatment meted out to the visiting scribe at these vast organisations. It is indeed a pleasure to work with such people.

Your initial approach must necessarily vary from the methods you employ with regard to interviewing stage stars, since it is essential that your contacts should be made through the studio publicity manager. These good folk are usually entangled in a maze of work and it is unfair to bother them unless and until you have some sound and specific idea for an interview.

But if you *have* got such an idea you will be assured of the most helpful co-operation.

For many years I have made a speciality of stage and film journalism, and during that time I have met a great many stars, directors and executives in that enthralling industry.

Your general procedure will be along the lines already dealt with fully in these pages.

Select the idea for your article, get an editor interested, then apply for an interview.

On arrival at the studio you will again be faced with the need for establishing your identity and your business, for the official in charge of the "Way In" is no whit less efficient than his counterpart at the stage door.

But once you are—oh, boy! What a world of colour and romance opens up before you! It is indeed a writer's paradise. Your brain reels with your reactions to the ideas that flood upon you.

However, you must not stray—yet. The publicity manager or his deputy will meet you and conduct you to the particular lot where your star is playing.

You will find the noise and bustle something to get used to; it will be different from anything you have ever experienced.

Your guide, anxious to be as helpful as possible, will introduce you to this star and that star, this world-famous director, this celebrated composer; they will shake you by the hand and pass on, swallowed up in the blazing light, the colour, the crowds and the noise.

You will have to think hard and quickly in order to keep your thoughts clearly marshalled and your impressions and introductions stored concisely for future use.

Your interview may take place in a dressing room, or in the studio cafeteria, in either of which cases it will be on a par with theatrical stars backstage.

More likely, you will be introduced to the star between shots and will sit on a make-believe doorstep, a coil of rope, or an artificial tree trunk, while the craftsmen are preparing the sound stage for the next shot.

The player will be in costume and heavy make-up. If the scene in question is an Oriental or tropical one the general atmosphere will be bizarre. Should your interviewee be a glamorous screen beauty you stand a very good chance of embarrassment—except that you don't have time for that sort of distraction.

If your star is a male, in evening dress, you just ignore the white handkerchief he has tucked in his collar, like a bib, to keep the greasepaint from soiling his neckwear.

As this is not intended to be a general impression of life in a film studio we will reluctantly tear ourselves away from the enthralling and all-absorbing, colourful atmosphere peculiar to that fantastic world.

My general advice is this : don't trouble those who can help you until you have something really worthwhile to put before them. Be brisk and businesslike when you are at the studio; attune yourself to mentally recording your impressions and emotions. And, above all, take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself.

During any single visit you will probably encounter at least twenty people who are world-famous in one way or another. Meet as many of them as you can, for such encounters are of potential value to you as a writer.

Finally, place your article and let the studio publicity manager, as well as the star you have interviewed, have a copy of the published work. By this means you will keep faith with those whose valuable time you have taken up and, with proper exploitation, will gradually earn the privilege of being a welcome visitor at the studio, with the consequent relaxing of formalities and ease of entry to all departments.

There is little need to describe the type of article emanating from this class of work. You have only to turn the pages of any periodical published for the vast army of film fans of both

sexes. Almost anything interesting under the name of a popular film player, or an interview with a star in which the name of the interviewer is prominently displayed, will find a home in such journals.

The work is easy, payment is good. Go to it!

### FAIRGROUND OPPORTUNITIES

The fairground is the free-lance interviewer's happy hunting ground and in view of this I unreservedly commend your attention to this sphere of activity.

Just think for a moment of any famous seaside fairground, of the travelling shows that visit the more outlandish places, and of the fairs that are a supplementary part of the great circuses which are, in normal times, one of London's annual attractions.

What do we find in them?

A collection of natural curiosities, of strange people demonstrating extraordinary powers, of trained animals and insects, of unusual feats of skill and endurance.

What a colourful field for your pen!

Those responsible for such exhibitions are just waiting to be interviewed. Like all show-people, publicity is their mainspring. They will respond to your overtures with goodwill and alacrity.

I have often felt that these fields of opportunity are neglected by the free-lance. I don't know why I should form this opinion unless it is that, apart from one enterprising free-lance press photographer, I have found myself without rivalry in exploiting the famous and extensive summer fairground at my home town.

Here, I have interviewed bathing beauties, sword-swallowers, South Sea Islanders who danced on broken glass, a diminutive Indian snake-handler, the owner of a champion fat pig, and a man who made fasting his chosen profession and held innumerable fantastic records in this connection.

There may be some writers who would scorn such subjects as fields for journalistic endeavour. The reply to them is that the man-in-the-street *does* like to read about such things. They are queer, unusual and interesting, and on that account interviews with and stories about such colourful characters will always catch the public eye.

These are among the easiest of interviews to secure and because of this they may definitely be regarded as a paying proposition.

Sundry or casual interviews of this nature are both interesting and profitable, but for results that are really worth while select the most arresting, exciting or appealing character and set yourself the perfectly pleasant task of exploiting him or her in every possible market.

I should like to guide you through the various stages of an idea that I exploited with some success a few years ago. The subject worked



itself out in a steady and progressive manner, and by studying the development you should be able to build up a skeleton form upon which to base similar ideas of your own.

Taking a stroll through our amusement park one summer day my eardrums were rudely tested by the shattering roar of a high-powered motor-cycle, and I paused to watch a lithe and muscular figure in a flame-coloured shirt, black riding breeches and a beret. He was attracting the attention of the crowds of holiday-makers by grimly revving the engine of the bike on which he was astride. He was George "Tornado" Smith, the famous Wall of Death rider.

Now riding the perpendicular wall was a new sensation at that time—and I *mean* sensation. I defy anyone to stand on the narrow platform at the top of a motordrome and watch those motor-cycles hurtling round the sheer upright walls, the riders' bodies at one with their machines, parallel with the ground twenty feet below, without being well and truly thrilled.

The roar of the machines in that enclosed wooden pit is thunderous and nerve-shattering. You hold your breath; you can't help it. You tell yourself the riders have gone mad. They can't survive.

But they do. They roar round and round the walls. They shoot upwards to the safety rail round the top of the 'drome then, with a flick of the wrists, hurtle down to the floor, to turn at the precise split-second and rip up again towards the startled spectators.

By way of a change they chase each other, passing and re-passing in mid-air. The slightest error of judgment would result in a ghastly crash.

As a finale Tornado does the maddest things. Roaring round at frightening speed, he calmly releases the handle-bars, turns round in the saddle, rides backwards, stands upright with one foot on the handle-bars and the other on the saddle and raises both hands high in the air . . . .

The first time I saw the act I unreservedly voted it the most breath-taking and astounding performance I had ever witnessed, and I still hold to that view.

Qualification number one was fulfilled. I decided to meet George "Tornado" Smith.

That decision put pounds in my pocket and created a lasting friendship. It also opened the way to widespread publicity that has proved of considerable value to the Wall of Death rider.

Several interviews with Tornado after the amusement park had closed for the night provided me with sufficient material for a dozen articles.

It was natural that the first should be a general article, packed with sensational facts and incidents, suitable for a popular weekly. Photographs were no difficulty; Tornado had plenty.

And so the first joint effort found a ready acceptance with *Everybody's*, wherein it duly appeared under the straightforward title of "Riding a Motor Bike up a Wall," with two illustrations.

A little reflection pointed to a specialised or technical market as the next possibility. I tried the editor of *Motor Cycle*, who jumped at the idea and duly printed an illustrated article called "Good-bye, Gravity!" A page and a half plus two action photographs.

I felt that these channels could still be pursued and when Smith conceived the sensational idea of putting a four-wheeled vehicle on the perpendicular wall and selected an Austin Seven with a special open body for this purpose, the editor of *Austin Magazine* was fully alive to the novelty and responded favourably to my suggestion of an interview article on the subject.

So in due course "Up—but not Over" appeared with a picture of Tornado driving his baby Austin round the walls below a sea of spectators—incidentally with both hands off the steering wheel!

The technical press now had to be given a rest and I turned my attention to the women's angle. Tornado's co-driver was a dark-haired, attractive girl working under the professional name of Marjory Dare. The idea of an article with the feminine angle well to the fore appealed instantly to the editor of *Home Notes* and once again a well-displayed illustrated article saw the light of day, this time under the crisp title of "Danger First!"

I should like you to read over again this brief description of the way in which this subject was handled. I do not suggest that there is anything unique or outstanding about it, but

I do want you to observe how the first four distinctive angles were carefully isolated and exploited.

Not one of these articles encroached, in subject matter, on another, with the result that they could be, and were, published within a comparatively brief period.

As a result of publishing these articles, *as promised*, and so winning my interviewee's confidence, he gradually entrusted me with the working out of other ideas, many of them his own, so that before long I was literally flooding the popular press with articles, paragraphs and photographs connected with Tornado Smith and the Wall of Death.

These culminated in arrangements with a London syndicate for a "career" story and an embryo idea for a popular-priced illustrated book.

I trust I have made my point.

Treat every contact conscientiously. Be honest and sincere in your dealings with the people you choose to interview. Turn out your best work, whether it be for a trainer of performing fleas and for a celebrity with a world-wide reputation.

You never know what the results of a new contact may mean to you in hard cash, so handle every job as though it is the most important thing you have undertaken.

Finally, be ever on the look-out for a character with whom, as a result of conscientious and, consequently, successful work, you can link up in a mutually profitable partnership.

## THE VALUE OF THE PUBLICITY AGENT

Sooner or later you will encounter that useful and hardworking individual, the publicity agent.

My advice in this connection is: whenever you come across a publicity agent whose contacts are of value to you, spare no effort to nurture and cement an association that will almost certainly be of considerable benefit to you in your work as a free-lance writer and interviewer.

Publicity agents are trusting folk. They will go to enormous lengths to obtain material for you. Don't let them down.

Do your utmost to get the stuff in print and never fail to send them copies of the publications containing the work.

Agents have an obligation to their clients, who retain them to keep their names before the public, and the only way in which the agent can justify himself is to produce printed stories regularly and frequently.

I have collaborated with publicity agents from London to Hollywood and have found their services to be of considerable value on many occasions.

They can get interviews for you and will enjoy doing it.

It may perhaps seem unfair that you should publish work under your name when you did not, in fact, obtain the material at first hand, but in this respect it is perfectly legitimate and nobody will crib, least of all the agent.

Your liability lies in your obligation to treat the publicity agent with fairness and courtesy

and to get into print the stories, articles or interviews which he takes such pains to secure for you.

It is just another aspect of the writing game, for you, as an interviewing journalist, obtain your rewards by publicising certain people, while he, the agent, obtains his living by helping to supply that material without which your articles could not be composed.

## MARKETS FOR YOUR WORK

The number and variety of publications willing to consider and print contributions based, in one form or another, on interview work, is very considerable. In fact, it is difficult to know which of the many popular periodicals and magazines on sale to the public will *not* give consideration to such work.

There is no claim to completeness in the list that follows. At the time of writing, paper control is easing steadily and it may well be that by the time these pages are in print new publications will be on sale and others, which have been suspended during the years of emergency, will have made a welcome re-appearance.

At all events the following selection will be helpful in giving an indication of the extensive range of potential markets for your work. It must not be construed that acceptances are certain; in most cases requirements are strictly specialised.

It is, however, useful to have a classified list within reach for immediate reference in the event of your meeting with the opportunity of placing articles or paragraphs as a result of interviews with personalities connected with the trades and professions which these publications serve.

## ACCOUNTANCY AND FINANCE

*Accountant*, 17, Market Place, St. Albans.

*Accountant's Magazine*, 23, Rutland Square,  
Edinburgh.

*The Banker*, 20, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.2.

## AUCTIONEERING, SURVEYING AND REAL ESTATE

*Journal of the Incorporated Society of Auctioneers  
and Landed Property Agents*, 34, Queen's  
Gate, S.W.7.

*Surveyor and Municipal Engineer*, 12 & 13,  
Henrietta Street, W.C.2.

## ADVERTISING

*Advertiser's Weekly*, Whitefriars House, Tallis  
Street, E.C.4.

*Display*, 16, West Central, W.C.1.

## AGRICULTURE AND KINDRED TOPICS

*Country Life*, 2/10, Tavistock Street, Covent  
Garden, W.C.2.

*Countryman*, Idbury, Kingham, Oxford.

*Countrygoer*, 43, St. Martin's Lane, W.C.2.

*Dairy Farmer*, 10, Tavern Street, Ipswich.

*Farmer & Stockbreeder*, Dorset House, Stamford  
Street, S.E.1.



*Farmers Weekly*, 43/44, Shoe Lane, E.C.4.  
*Field*, 72/78, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Fruit, Flower & Vegetable Trades' Journal*,  
St. Albans.  
*Fruit Grower*, 154, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Town & Country Planning*, 28, King Street,  
W.C.2.

#### ANIMAL SUBJECTS

*Animal Pictorial*, Friars Lodge, Friars Lane,  
Richmond.  
*Animal Ways*, 105, Jermyn Street, S.W.1.  
*Animals' Defender*, 92, Victoria Street, S.W.1.  
*Cats & Kittens*, 17, Cadborough Cliff, Rye,  
Sussex.  
*Game & Gun*, 34, Victoria Street, S.W.1.  
*Gamekeeper*, Hertford, Herts.  
*Horse*, 66, Sloane Street, S.W.1.  
*Horse & Hound*, 93, Long Acre, W.C.2.  
*Riding*, 2/10, Tavistock Street, Covent Garden,  
W.C.2.

#### AVIATION

*Aeromodeller*, Allen House, Newarke Street,  
Leicester.  
*Aeronautics*, Tower House, Southampton Street,  
Strand, W.C.2.  
*Aeroplane*, Bowling Green Lane, E.C.1.  
*Air Training Corps Gazette*, 1a, Pall Mall East,  
S.W.1.  
*Flight*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.

## CINEMATOGRAPHY

*Amateur Cine World*, Link House, 24, Store Street, W.C.1.

*Cine-Technician*, 2, Soho Square, W.1.

*Cinema News*, 93/95, Wardour Street, W.1.

*Daily Film Renter*, 127/133, Wardour Street, W.1.

*Kinematograph Weekly*, 85, Long Acre, W.C.2.

*Picture Show*, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

*Picturegoer*, 93, Long Acre, W.C.2.

*Sight & Sound*, 4, Great Russell Street, W.C.1.

*Sound*, Norfolk House, Norfolk Street, W.C.2.

*To-Day's Cinema*, 93/95, Wardour Street, W.1.

## EDUCATION AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

*A.M.A.*, Woodburn, Eaton Road, Ilkley, Yorks.

*Child Education*, Montague House, Russell Square, W.C.1.

*Education*, 10, Queen Anne Street, W.1.

*Journal of Education*, 40, Walton Crescent, Oxford.

*New Era*, Latimer House, Church Street, Chiswick, W.4.

*School Government Chronicle*, 24/26, Blackfriars Lane, E.C.4.

*School Management*, 18/20, York Buildings, Adelphi, W.C.2.

*Schoolmaster*, Hamilton House, Hastings Street, W.C.1.

*Teacher's Work*, 41/42, Nassau Street, Dublin.

*Teachers World*, Montague House, Russell Street,  
W.C.1.

*Times Educational Supplement*, Printing House  
Square, E.C.4.

### ENGINEERING SUBJECTS

*Air Treatment Engineer*, 7, Princes Street, S.W.1.

*Aircraft Engineering*, 12, Bloomsbury Square,  
W.C.1.

*Automobile Engineer*, Dorset House, Stamford  
Street, S.E.1.

*Bus & Coach*, Dorset House, Stamford Street,  
S.E.1.

*Civil Engineering*, Aldwych House, W.C.2.

*Colliery Engineering*, 33, Tothill Street, S.W.1.

*Electrical Age*, 20, Regent Street, S.W.1.

*Electrical Review*, Dorset House, Stamford Street,  
S.E.1.

*Electrician*, Bouverie House, 154, Fleet Street,  
E.C.4.

*The Engineer*, 28, Essex Street, Strand, W.C.2.

*Engineering*, 35/36, Bedford Street, W.C.2.

*Gas Times*, 29, Grove Road, Leighton Buzzard.

*Iron & Steel*, Dorset House, Stamford Street,  
S.E.1.

*Light & Lighting*, 32, Victoria Street, S.W.1.

*Machinery Market*, 146a, Queen Victoria Street,  
E.C.4.

*Mechanics*, 2, Bream's Buildings, E.C.4.

*Mining Journal*, 15, George Street, Mansion  
House, E.C.4.

*Steam Engineer*, 90/91, High Holborn, W.C.2.

*Water & Water Engineering*, 30/31, Furnival Street, E.C.4.

### MOTORING SUBJECTS

*Austin Magazine*, 84, Promenade, Cheltenham.

*Autocar*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.

*Commercial Motor*, Bowling Green Lane, E.C.1.

*Ford Times*, 27, Glasshouse Street, W.1.

*Light Car*, Bowling Green Lane, E.C.1.

*The New Outlook*, Cowley, Oxford.

*Motor Trader*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.

*Motor Transport*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.

*Transport World*, 82, Tankerville Road, S.W.16.

### MUSIC

*Gramophone*, 49, Ebrington Road, Kenton, Middlesex.

*Melody Maker*, 93, Long Acre, W.C.2.

*Music Review*, "Josephs," The Street, Takeley, Essex.

*Organ*, 13, Chichester Rents, Chancery Lane, W.C.2.

*The Strad*, 2, Duncan Terrace, N.1.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

*Amateur Photographer*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.

*British Journal of Photography*, 24, Wellington Street, Strand, W.C.2.

*Miniature Camera Magazine*, 9, Cavendish Square, W.1.  
*Free-lance Writer & Photographer*, St. Ives, Huntingdon.

#### SCIENTIFIC SUBJECTS

*Chemical Age*, Bouverie House, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Discovery*, 244, High Holborn, W.C.1.  
*Gemmologist*, 226, Latymer Court, Hammer-smith, W.6.  
*Meccano Magazine*, Binns Road, Liverpool, 13.  
*Microscope*, Bank Chambers, High Holborn, W.C.1.

#### SPORT

*Angler's News*, 10, The Hermitage, Richmond, Surrey.  
*Angling*, 2/10, Tavistock Street, W.C.2.  
*Bicycle*, 8/10, Temple Avenue, E.C.4.  
*Cycling*, Bowling Green Lane, E.C.1.  
*Fishing Gazette*, 171, High Street, Beckenham, Kent.  
*Golf Monthly*, 56, Annandale Street, Edinburgh.  
*Golfing*, 98, St. Martin's Lane, W.C.2.  
*Shooting Times*, 74/76, Temple Chambers, E.C.4.  
*Sun Bathing Review*, Link House, 24, Store Street, W.C.1.  
*Yachting Monthly*, 3/4, Clements Inn, Strand, W.C.2.  
*Yachting World*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.  
*Yachtsman*, 2, Bream's Buildings, E.C.4.

## WRITING

*Author, Playwright & Composer*, 84, Drayton Gardens, S.W.10.

*Free-lance Writer & Photographer*, St. Ives, Huntingdon.

*John o' London's Weekly*, Tower House, Southampton Street, W.C.2.

*The Writer*, 47, Princes Gate, S.W.7.

## GENERAL BUSINESS AND RETAIL SUBJECTS

*Baker & Confectioner*, 11/13, Bream's Buildings, E.C.4.

*Bakers' Record*, 110/111, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

*Bookseller*, 13, Bedford Square, W.C.1.

*Bottling*, 22/23, Laurence Pountney Lane, E.C.4.

*Brewers' Journal*, Eastcheap Buildings, E.C.3.

*British Plastics*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.

*British Printer*, 55/58, Pall Mall, S.W.1.

*British Shoeman*, Drury House, Russell Street, W.C.2.

*Brushes & Toilet Goods Buyer*, 9, Whitburn Street, Bridgnorth.

*Builder*, 4, Catherine Street, W.C.2.

*Cabinet Maker*, 154/160, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

*Caterer & Hotel Keeper*, 1, Dorset Buildings, E.C.4.

*Chemist & Druggist*, 28, Essex Street, W.C.2.

*Claycraft*, 8, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.2.

*Dairy Farmer*, 10, Tavern Street, Ipswich.

*Decorator*, 49, Wellington Street, W.C.2.

*Display*, 16, West Central, W.C.1.

*Distributive Trades Journal*, Dilke House, Malet Street, W.C.1.  
*Drapers' Record*, 229, High Holborn, W.C.1.  
*Food*, 33, Tothill Street, Westminster, S.W.1.  
*Foundry Trade Journal*, 49, Wellington Street, Strand, W.C.2.  
*Furnishing Trades Organiser*, Drury House, Russell Street, Drury Lane, W.C.2.  
*Furniture Record*, 36, Worship Street, E.C.2.  
*Games & Toys*, 107, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Garage & Motor Agent*, 62, Doughty Street, W.C.1.  
*Hardware Trade Journal*, 154, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Hatters' Gazette*, 110/111, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Industrial Diamond Review*, 226, Latymer Court, Hammersmith, W.6.  
*Ironmonger*, 28, Essex Street, W.C.2.  
*Laundry Record*, Drury House, Russell Street, W.C.2.  
*Leather Trades' Review*, Bouverie House, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Librarian*, "Lodgewood," Gravesend.  
*Man and his Clothes*, 24, Gloucester Place, Portman Square, W.1.  
*Men's Wear*, Kings Bourne House, 229/231, High Holborn, W.C.1.  
*Metal Industry*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.  
*Miller*, Bouverie House, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Motor Cycle & Cycle Trader*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.  
*Newspaper World*, 154, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

*Nursing Mirror*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.  
*Oil & Colour Trades Journal*, 8, Ludgate Broadway, E.C.4.  
*Optician*, 72/78, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Paper Trade Review*, 329, High Holborn, W.C.1.  
*Pharmaceutical Journal*, 33, Bedford Place, W.C.1  
*Plumbing Trade Journal*, Cromford House, Cromford Court, Manchester, 4.  
*Soap, Perfumery & Cosmetics*, 110/111, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Sports Dealer*, 19, Garrick Street, W.C.2.  
*Textile Recorder*, Old Colony House, South King Street, Manchester, 2.  
*Timber Trades Journal*, Bouverie House, Fleet Street, E.C.4.  
*Tobacconist & Confectioner*, Eastcheap Buildings, E.C.3.  
*Watchmaker, Jeweller & Silversmith*, Drury House, Russell Street, W.C.2.  
*Welding*, Dorset House, Stamford Street, S.E.1.

The publications listed above have been selected to include those which you are unlikely to find on the average bookstall.

For interviews and interview-inspired articles of a popular and general character you will find that the well-known periodicals of the *Tit-Bits*, *Answers*, *Weekly Telegraph* school afford wide scope, while the women's press covers so vast a field that I recommend you to buy two or three different publications weekly until you



have built up a comprehensive library. THEN STUDY THEM. You will assuredly find at least a dozen that will take the kind of material you can offer.

Go ahead, my friend.

You will find the work of securing, carrying out, and writing interviews one of the most congenial and, let it be hoped, profitable occupations you have ever tackled.

Good luck to you !

